



School Safety (Building a Healthy School Climate) Recommendations

On August 3rd, 2019, the Sacramento Black Parallel School Board (BPSB) devoted significant time during its regularly scheduled organizational meeting to address the topic of school safety and to recommend to the Sacramento City Unified School District strategies of how to continue school safety in the absence of School Resource Officers (SRO's).

The conversation was rich and eventually led to useful strategies and program alternatives to contracting SRO's on school campuses. The following is a summary of those recommendations from the BPSB Membership and the Executive Board Members:

I. School Safety Challenges and Concerns

Too often teachers, administrators and staff through unconscious bias and limited understanding of students of color routinely ask law enforcement to respond to ordinary school-wide and classroom behavioral issues that lead to harsh disciplinary outcomes for certain students, too often Black students.

Historically school staffs handled routine misbehavior of students. In the age of "Zero Tolerance" that responsibility has increasingly been transferred to law enforcement leading to disproportionate outcomes for students of color. Too often a regular suspension for fighting leads to an arrest and eventually a criminal record. Students who cannot afford an attorney are coaxed into pleading guilty and find themselves entering the school to prison pipeline.

In short, the presence of SROs on campus fosters an environment in which black and brown students (including students with disabilities and foster youth) are treated like criminals.

Consequently, schools are inherently dependent upon punishment and less on supporting student growth and mental health through programs and activities that are supportive, empathetic (caring) and resource full of interventions that lead to resolution of the very concerns and issues that students bring to school.

When some students come to school battling issues in their homes and communities, schools too often lack the resources and skills to address the needs of troubled teens whose behaviors too often surface in school.

II. What Works – Where the District Should Invest

The BPSB recommends the District implement a positive public relation campaign that promotes the development of a positive and safe school climate that is welcoming, caring and supportive of all stakeholders. This campaign would set the tone for the district that schools should be a safe and encouraging environments for students, parents, teachers and staff. The campaign would not

end on the first day of school but continue the conversations with parents, students and community about a new school healthy environment throughout the year. The following are activities that could be a part of the campaign:

1. Schools should hold weekly relationship building programs and activities for students and staff to encourage the development of mutual understanding/respect and empathy.
2. Instead of police officers, schools should hire support staff that are representative of their community within the attendance areas of the school. In order to do this the Hall Monitor position should be updated to include a Lead Monitor. The Lead Monitor would have the responsibility to train other monitors and develop schedules and participate on the school wide safety team with campus leadership teams. School monitors should be trained in district school climate initiatives, conflict resolution and how to build positive relationships with students. Hall monitor salaries should be increased to a living wage with benefits to reduce turnover.
3. The district should develop and build restorative justice programs that completely change the thinking of how students concerns, and issues are handled. Too often restorative practices are lumped on top of punitive practices that make the whole practice unworkable. The effort should include the development of curriculum to promote positive practices in and out of the classroom.
4. Positive Behavior Intervention programs and Socio-emotional Services (not SEL without cultural competency practices) should be used in all elementary and secondary campuses.
5. The school district should hire additional staff to address mental health concerns on the part of students and staff. The following are examples:
 - a. Counselors, social workers, and psychologists should be readily available to address both the academic goals and behavioral issues on the part of students. The emphasis should not be on punishment but should be focused on repairing relationships and helping students understand how their misbehavior impacts and shortchanges their potential and academic success.
 - b. The district should encourage teachers to use cooperative learning groups (class meetings) and restorative justice practices in their classroom.
6. Teachers should be trained to provide concrete ways for students to be academically successful rather than academically punished for academic failure. Teachers should add to their tool-kits ways to work with students on their individual academic challenges and needs rather than making them compete with their peers for academic success.
7. Each school should collect semi-annual student assessments and evaluations of teachers and staff, that include school safety.
8. Teachers with high rates of classroom management issues who write large numbers of student referrals should undergo administrative and peer support activities along with classroom management training.
 - a) Teachers should be provided access to counseling and peer support so they can feel safe and ready to teach in their classrooms.
 - b) Schools should hold multicultural celebrations, recognize students for their positive contributions and behavior, and work with parents to help all students

graduate and move onto a college, trade schools, and the workforce.

- c) Schools should encourage and help students get involved in extracurricular activities that provide positive reinforcements.

Law Enforcement

1. When law enforcement is called onto campuses, the reasons and outcomes should be documented, and the district should release a semi-annual report that is available to all stakeholders.
2. The district should prepare a MOU with the Sacramento City Police Department and the Sacramento County Sheriff that includes specific policy guidelines for when law enforcement can be called on campus and what it is that they do when they are there.
3. The district needs to train and provide clear directives to school principals on how to work with city or county police personnel and to handle challenging incidents with all students, especially Black, Latinx and Students with Disabilities, and Foster Youth.